

# Weimar Germany 1918-1933

History 112

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# The Origins of Totalitarianism

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Hannah Arendt, 1951





"The aim of totalitarian education has never been to instil convictions but to destroy the capacity to form any."

Hannah Arendt



# Nineteen Eighty-Four

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George Orwell, 1949



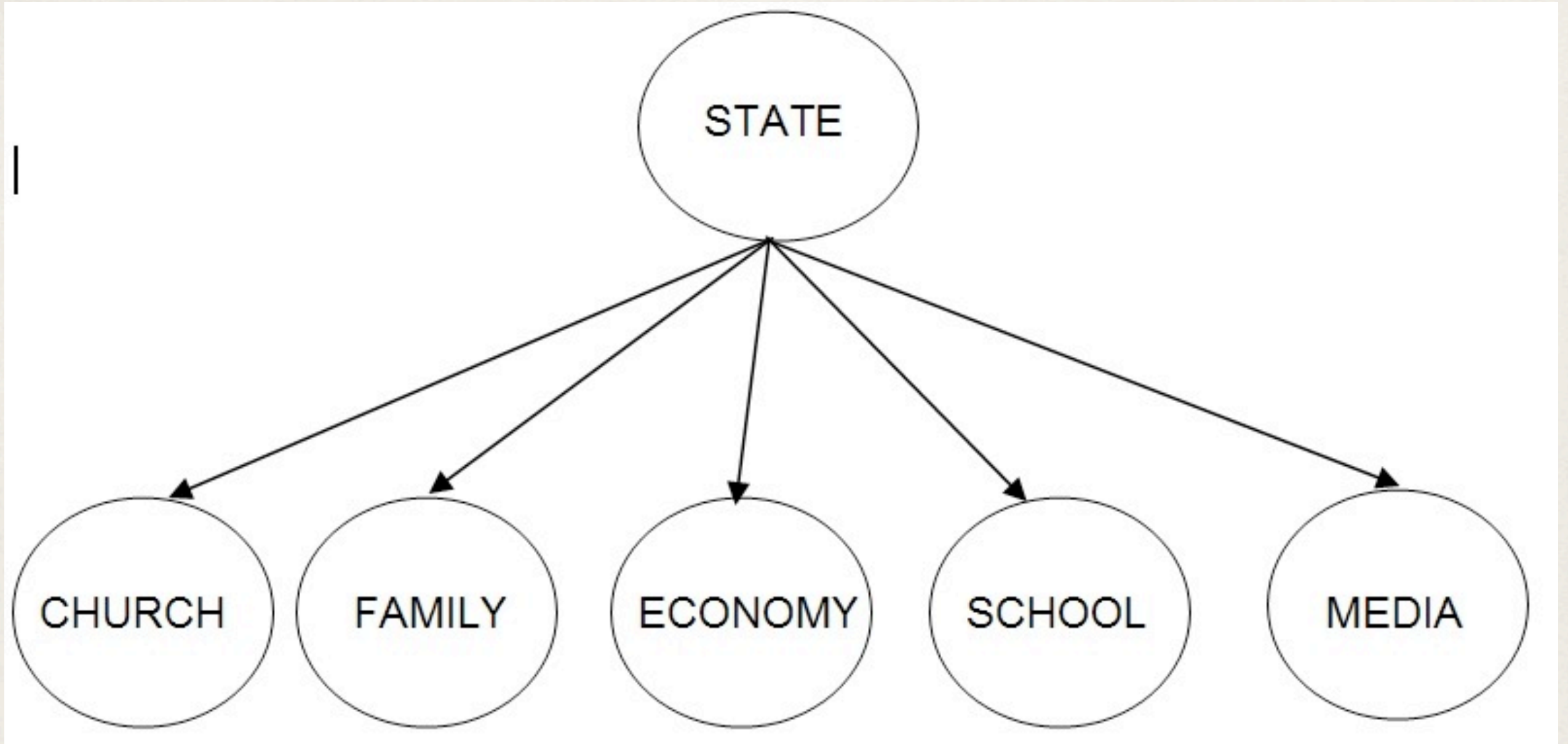
“Then the face of Big Brother faded away  
again and instead the three slogans of the  
Party stood out in bold capitals:

**WAR IS PEACE**

**FREEDOM IS SLAVERY**

**IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”**





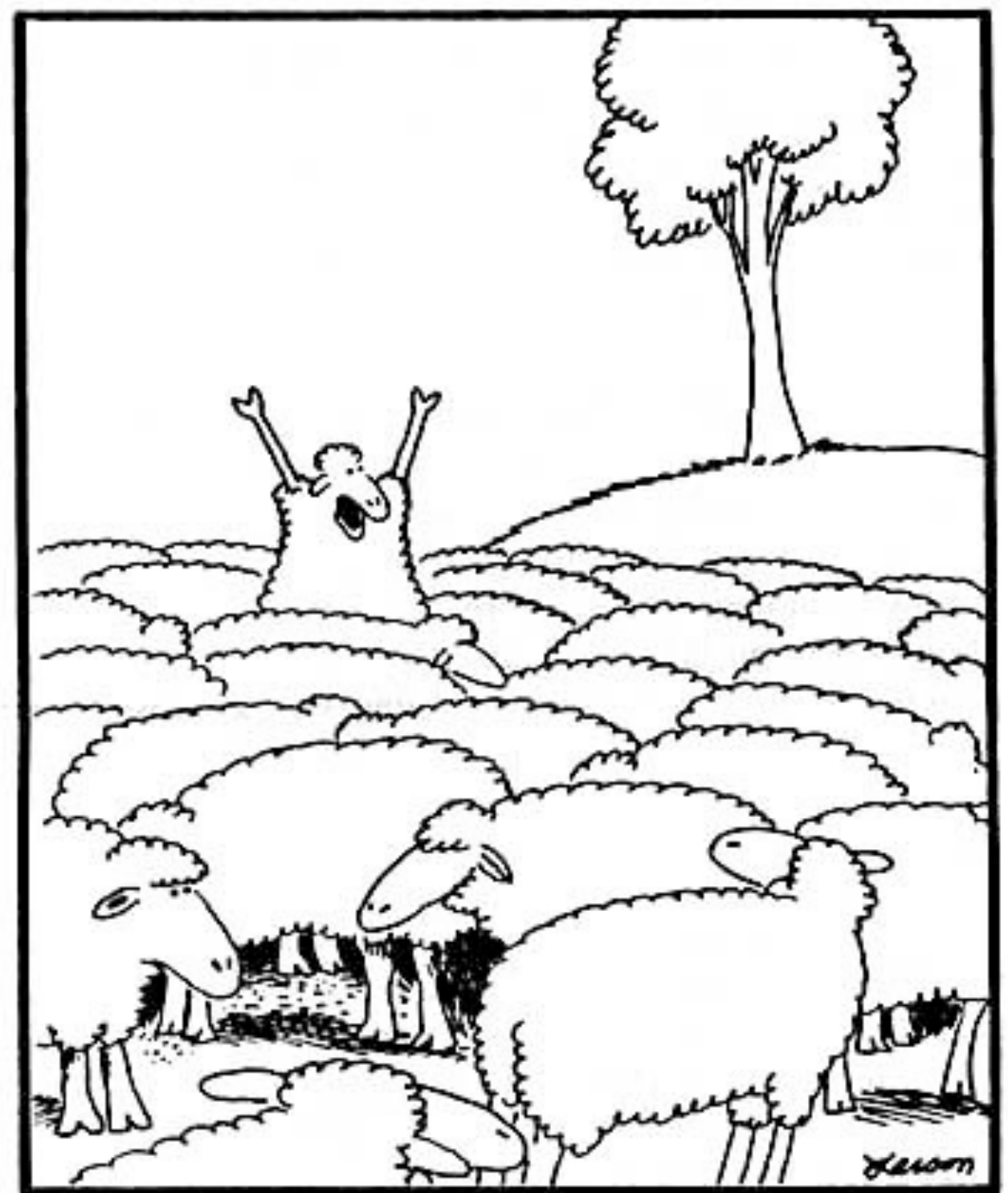
Get the picture?

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# Why do People Follow?

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How do Totalitarian governments succeed in taking over?



"Wait! Wait! Listen to me! . . . We don't HAVE to be just sheep!"





Does this image suggest an answer?

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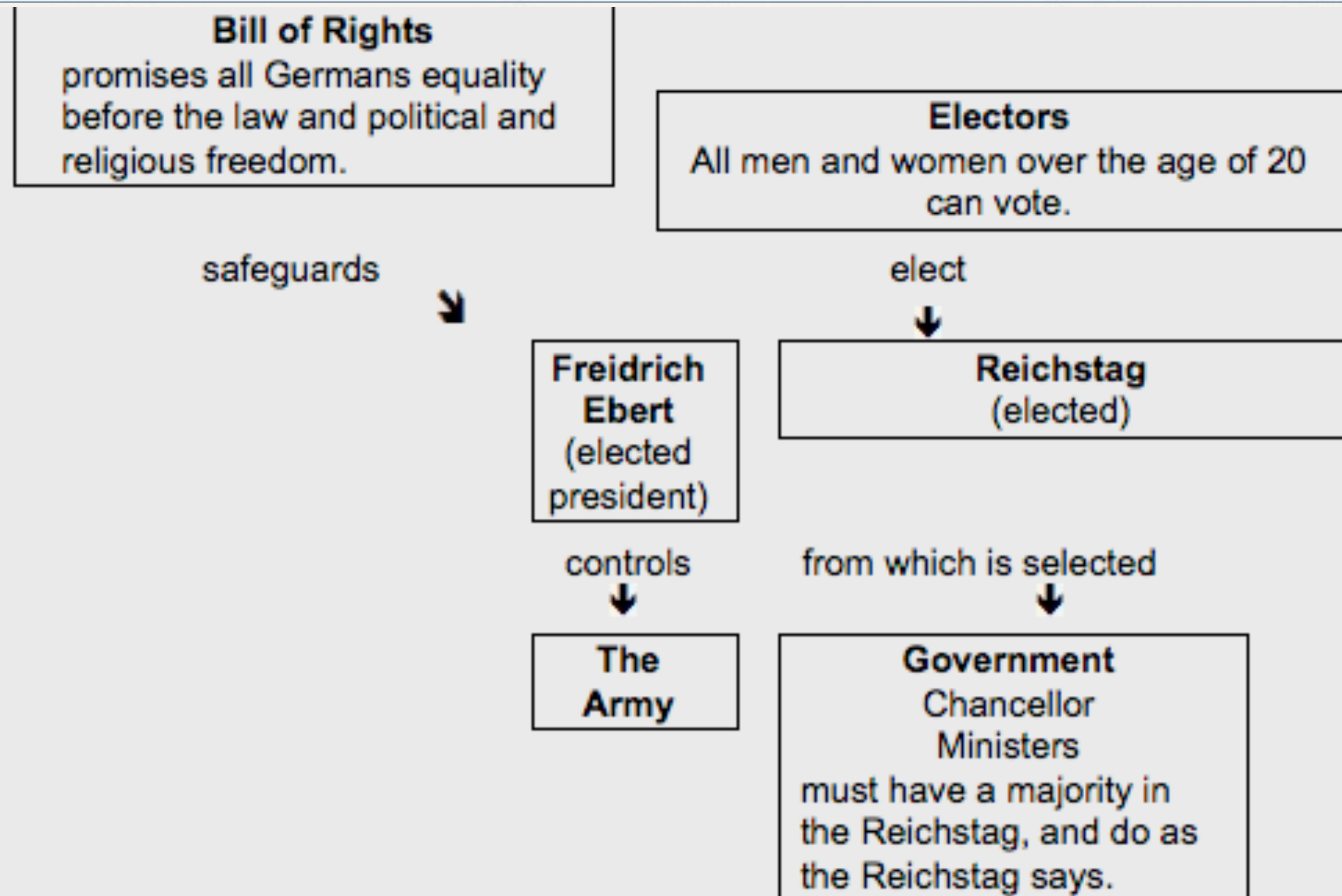


They (who) seek to establish  
systems of government based on  
the regimentation of all human  
beings by a handful of individual  
rulers ...call this a new order. It is  
not new and it is not order.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

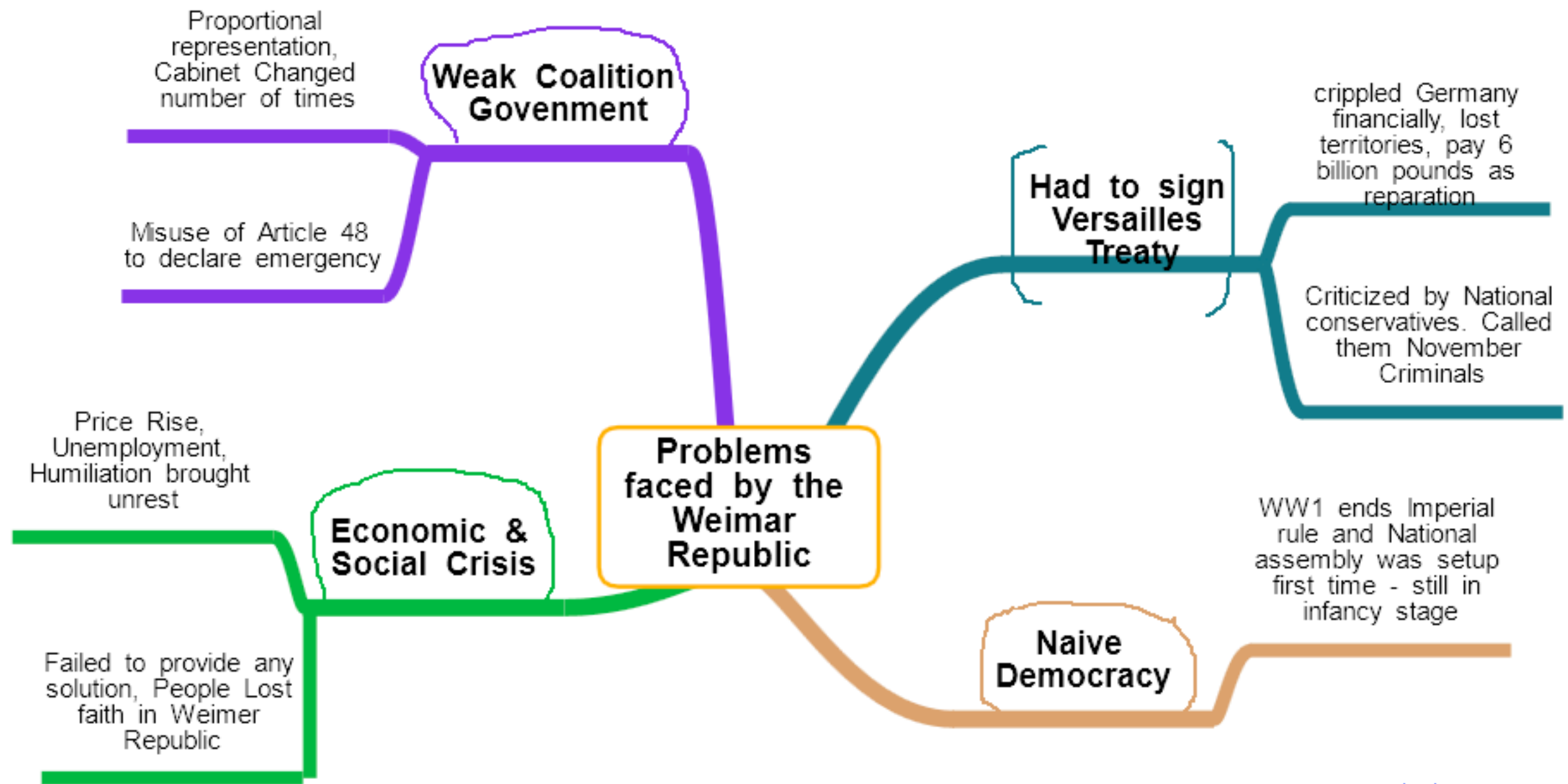


# Weimar Germany: Fledgling Democracy





# Weimar Republic Problems





People are afraid of chaos and  
disorder.

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# The Nazis Are NOT Inevitable

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# Hyper-Inflation in Weimar Germany

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- ❖ John Maynard Keynes: *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Book)
- ❖ *"The inflationism of the currency systems of Europe has proceeded to extraordinary lengths. The various belligerent Governments, unable, or too timid or too short-sighted to secure from loans or taxes the resources they required, have printed notes for the balance."*
- ❖ Meaning: Germany did not want to tax the population to get money, so they printed it.
- ❖ Effect: Money became lost its agreed upon value, and more and more of it was needed to buy things. The money eventually became worthless.





Date:		German Marks needed to buy one ounce of gold
4 YEAR CYCLE		
Jan 1919	→ HUNDREDS	170.00
Sept 1919		499.00
Jan 1920		1,340.00
Sept 1920		1,201.00
Jan 1921	→	1,349.00
Sept 1921		2,175.00
Jan 1922	→	3,976.00
Sept 1922	→	30,381.00
Jan 1923		372,477.00
Sept 1923	MILLIONS	269,439,000.00
Oct 2, 1923		6,631,749,000.00
Oct 9, 1923	BILLIONS	24,868,950,000.00
Oct 16, 1923		84,969,072,000.00
Oct 23, 1923	→	1,160,552,882,000.00
Oct 30, 1923		1,347,070,000,000.00
Nov 5, 1923	TRILLIONS	8,700,000,000,000.00
Nov 30, 1923	→	87,000,000,000,000.00

The German hyperinflation occurred over a period of several years





# Scapegoats

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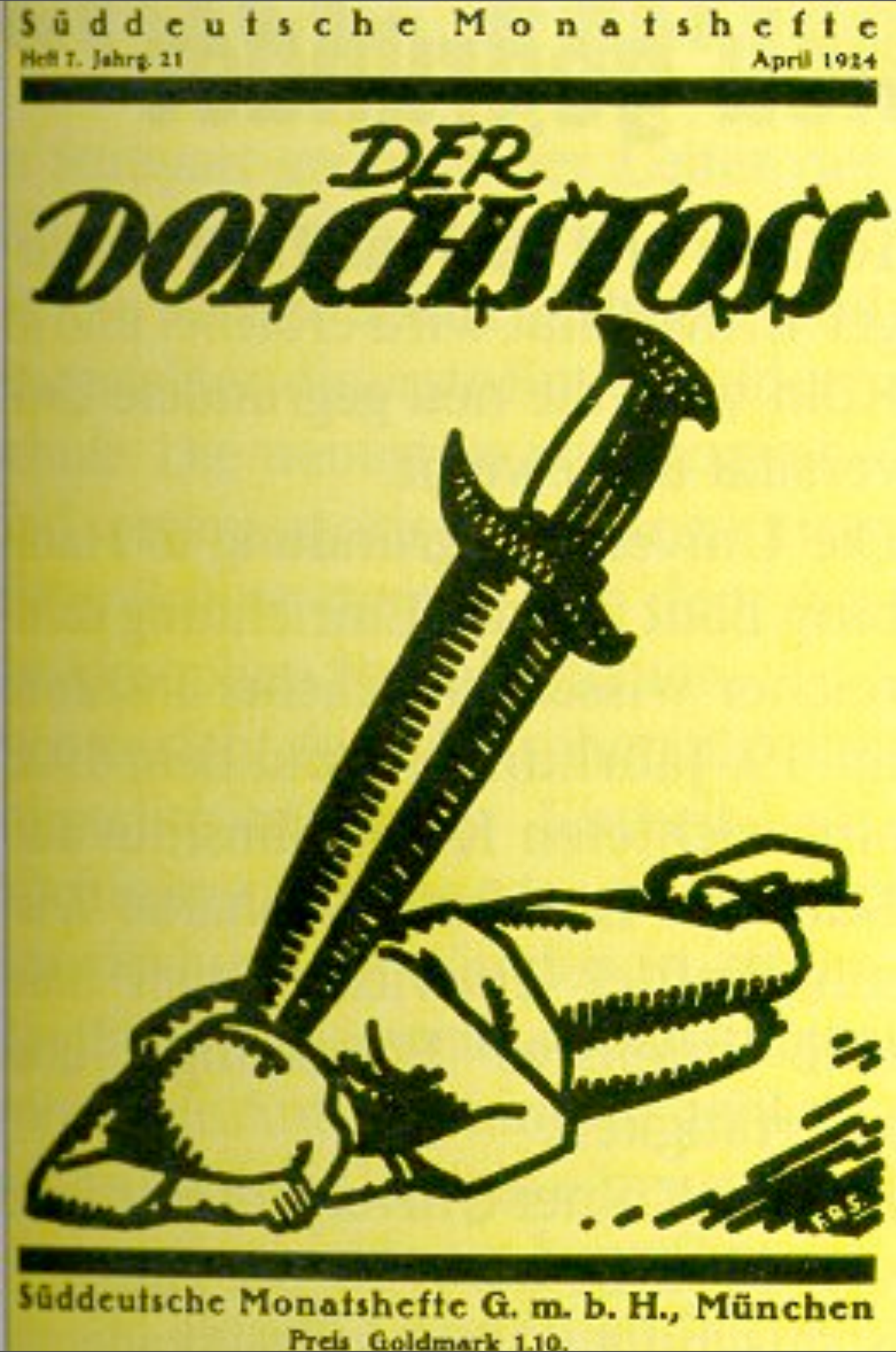
- ❖ Only about one third of the money went to reparations payments
- ❖ Government did not spend money well
- ❖ Too easy to blame reparations for all problems - but it is not accurate.



# Weimar's Problems

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- ❖ “November Criminals” blamed by extremist political parties for all of Germany’s problems.
- ❖ Extremists portrayed Weimar government as stabbing Germany in the back
- ❖ Democracy never given a fighting chance.
- ❖ Extremists want to destroy democratic government





# Article 48 and the Reichstag Fire

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- ❖ “In case public safety is seriously threatened or disturbed, the Reich President may take the measures necessary to reestablish law and order, if necessary using armed force. In the pursuit of this aim he may suspend the civil rights described in articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 154, partially or entirely.”

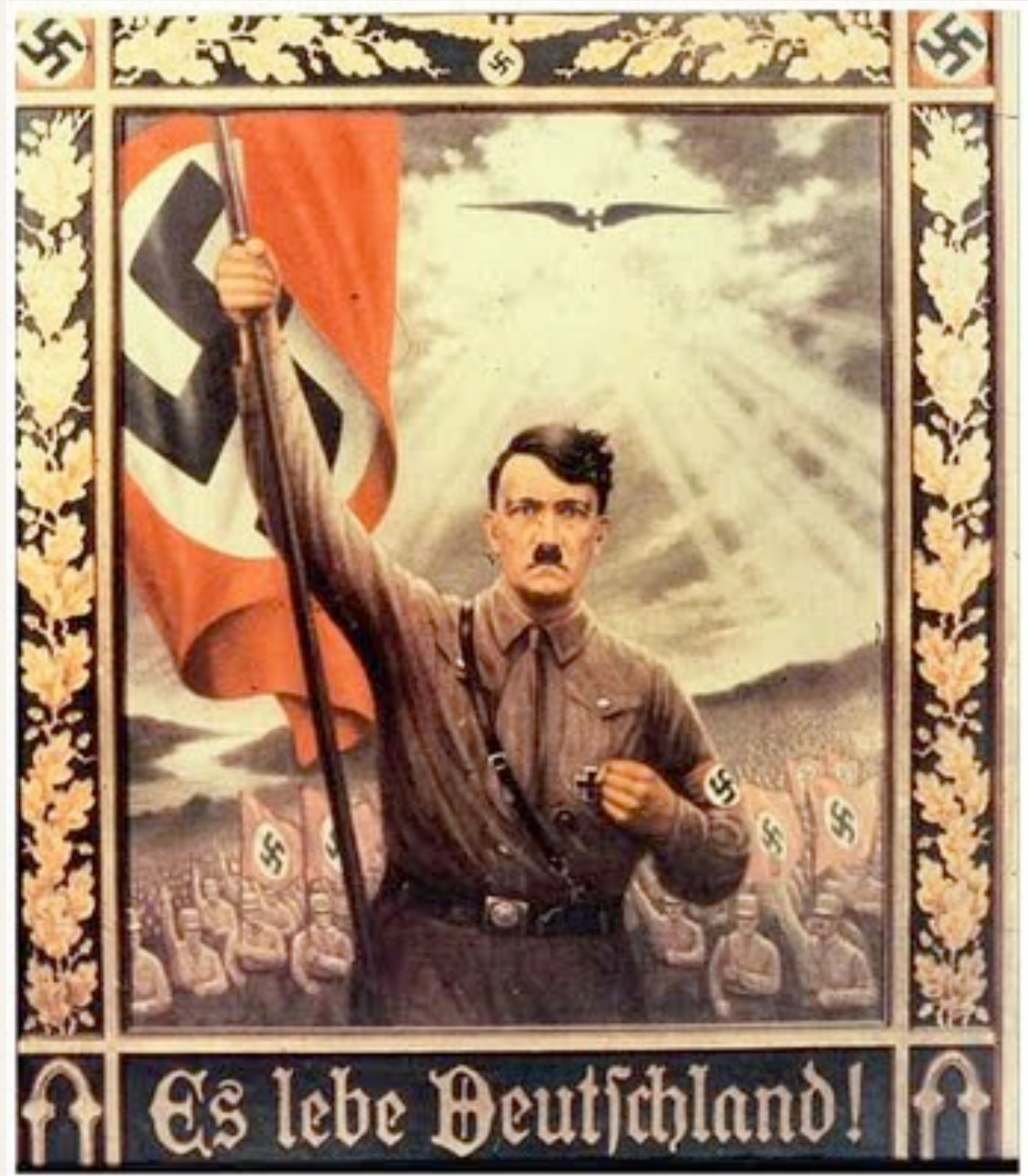




# How to Manipulate an Election:

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- ❖ Reichstag Fire - set by Nazis
- ❖ Blame Communists
- ❖ Convince President Hindenburg to invoke Article 48
- ❖ Ban Opposition parties from campaigning
- ❖ Portray Hitler as saviour of Germany
- ❖ “Win” election





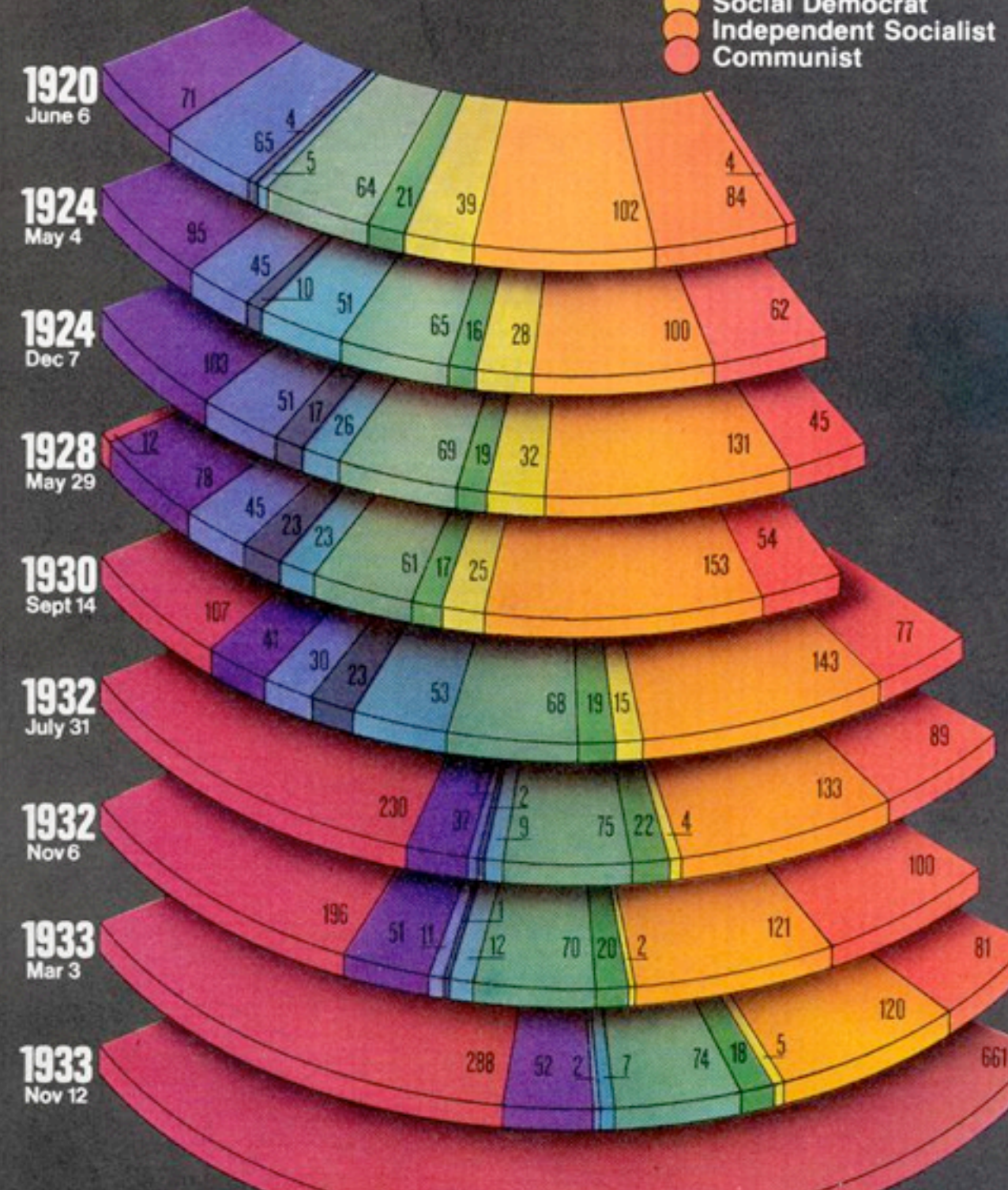
# Weak Coalition

- ❖ Democratic Parties were initially strong, but as economic situation worsened people began to support increasingly extremist parties

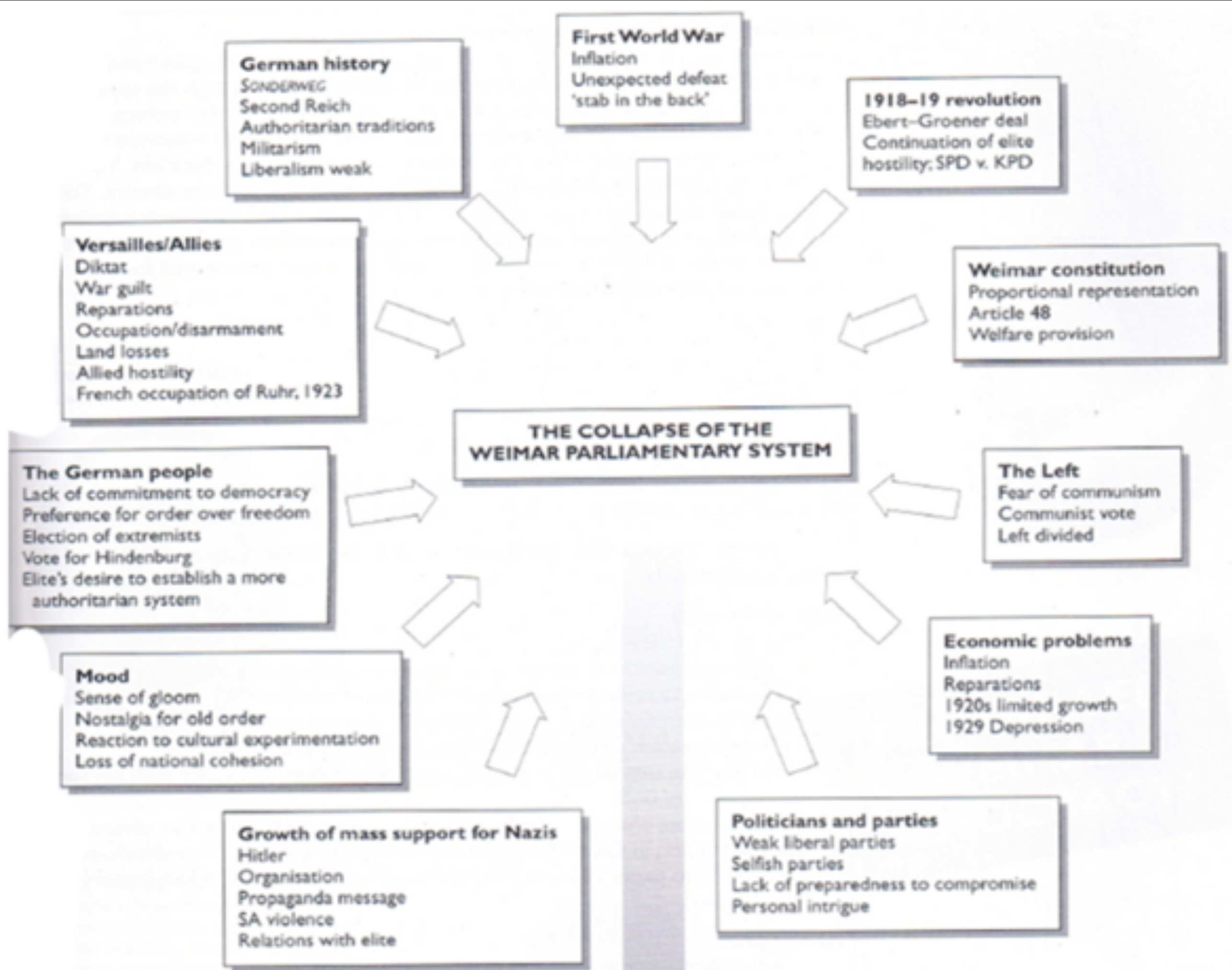
Party Representation in the Reichstag 1920-33



The Reichstag









# So why do people follow?

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- ❖ End to Fear: Nazis offer structure, order and promise an end to chaos
- ❖ Nostalgia: Nazis appeal to militaristic past when Germany was a great power.





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By the time the German people  
realize what the Nazis were

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it was too late to do anything about it.